

## Address at Fort Snelling in the celebration of the centennial anniversary of the treaty of Pike with the Sioux /

### ADDRESS AT FORT SNELLING IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY OF THE TREATY OF PIKE WITH THE SIOUX.\*

\* This Celebration was on September 23, 1905. In the series of speakers, General Baker represented the Minnesota Territorial Pioneers and the Minnesota Historical Society.

BY GEN. JAMES H. BAKER.

#### EARLY EXPLORERS, MISSIONARIES, AND TRADERS.

The region denominated Minnesota is not a land wholly devoid of ancient annals. It is true we have no venerable ruins or broken temples, no turreted castles, no specters of dead empires, to salute the eye. But there are some legacies of the immemorial past which may fill the soul of the antiquary with respect for our elder days. In some remote age the mound builders were here, and left traces of pottery, stone, and copper, which baffle our archæological friends.

In the twilight of our recorded history came the intrepid Le Sueur, with his bronzed followers, passing this very point more than two hundred years ago, with the daring spirit of Cortez or Pizarro in quest of fabled gold.

The Jesuit fathers also appear upon the scene, Allouez, Marquette, and other devoted missionaries, who planted the banner of the cross amid our northern Indian tribes. They imprinted their early presence as nomenclators, calling rivers, lakes, and islands for their

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patron saints. The people of the Northwest are yet to build a monument to the memory of these immortal followers of Loyola.

After these came the great British fur companies, lords of the North, who exercised dominion and power far away from the eye of civilization, with wonderful stories of despotism and adventure. Violence, bloodshed, and open war, marked the career of conflicting interests.

292

Following these was the advent of American influence, and Astor, Crooks, Stewart, Oakes, Borup, and other bold and adventurous spirits, raised the American flag on our northern confines.

What a panorama of wonderful life was here enacted! Religious enthusiasm first gave our northern regions to the world, and the great fur companies afterward held them with baronial power. These were the scenes of the long ago, which may yet fill pages of our history with all the fascination of romance.

Such was the grand prelude to our own day, when John C. Calhoun's memorable order to Lieut. Col. Henry Leavenworth flung open the gates of the Northwest on the golden hinges of opportunity, and thence came that stream of progressive changes, the end of which no prophet can foresee.

### **THE TREATY BY PIKE IN 1805.**

One hundred years ago this day Lieut. Zebulon M. Pike, in behalf of the United States, and certain chiefs of the Sioux nation, at a council duly held on the island within our view, which bears his name, purchased this tract of land, "from below the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Peter's, up the Mississippi, to include the Falls of St. Anthony, extending nine miles on each side of the river." For this grant of land \$200 in sundry

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presents and sixty gallons of whiskey were paid in hand, and \$2,000 more in cash at a later period. Whiskey then, as later, seemed to be necessary to baptize an Indian bargain.

Subsequently, in 1817, Major Stephen H. Long, of the United States army, in a report to the war department, recommended this locality at the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Peter's rivers as a suitable site for a permanent fort. There it rested till events in the Northwest revived the subject. The treaty of 1818 with England, fixing our northwestern boundary, was treated lightly by our English neighbors, and the trading posts of the great fur companies were not withdrawn, though Lieutenant Pike, with a fearless hand, had torn down the British flag wherever displayed. A tide of white settlers was setting toward the Northwest, and the savages of the country, yet under British influence, were to be repressed.

293

### **BUILDING AND NAMING THE FORT.**

John C. Calhoun was then secretary of war under President Monroe. The patriotism of the secretary was as wide as the country. Two generations have carped at Calhoun, subsequently the great apostle of human slavery; but at that hour he was our friend, and issued the momentous order which opened the doors of Minnesota to settlement and civilization. He directed Henry Leavenworth, Lieutenant Colonel of the Fifth United States Infantry, to transfer the bulk of his regiment, then rendezvoused at Detroit, Michigan, to the junction of the St. Peter's (now the Minnesota) and Mississippi rivers, for the purpose of establishing a military post at that vital point, on ground covered by Pike's sleeping treaty.

A tedious and perilous journey, through a tangled wilderness, brought Leavenworth and his command to the Mendota side of the St. Peter's river, where, in September, 1819, the first cantonment was formed which foreshadowed the fort yet to come. The high water of the ensuing spring flooded the camp, and Colonel Leavenworth hastily moved over the St. Peter's river to some well known springs, and called the new place "Camp

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Coldwater.” It was nearly a mile above the present fort, on the Mississippi river, where the new cantonment was made. Leavenworth next prepared plans for a permanent fort, and the site selected was about three hundred yards west of the present fort, and on the first rise back from the river. These plans were subsequently materially altered by his successor, Colonel Snelling.

Leavenworth named the post “Fort St. Anthony.” The material used was hewed logs and lumber. Of the latter much was required for so large a fort. They found all that was necessary on the Rum river. A muley sawmill was erected at the Falls of St. Anthony, and the logs were cut with a whip-saw. All the labor was done by the soldiers of the command.

During the winter of 1819–20, the scurvy broke out in a most malignant form, and more than forty died. Thus a cemetery was made, coeval with the founding of the fort. It was the autumn of 1823, before the soldiers' barracks were so far completed as to permit their occupancy, and the officers' quarters were partially occupied that winter.

294

In June, 1821, Col. Josiah Snelling, of the Fifth Infantry, succeeded Leavenworth, who was promoted to the colonelcy of another regiment. The new commander changed the entire plan of the fort, and the location was moved to its present site. On the 10th of September, 1821, the corner stone was laid, and formal ceremonies were held; the band played, songs were sung, and whiskey was issued to the joyous throng. The stone for building the fort was quarried from the very bluff on which the structure rose. The soldiers did the work, and were paid wages as mechanics. The design was diamond-shaped, to accommodate itself to the conformation of the bluff.

Thus the fortress rose, with tower and outlook, guardhouse and hospital, commissary and barracks, offices and chapel, walls and parapets. It stood overlooking the confluence of two noble streams, like a castle upon the Rhine, at once the cradle and defense of our earliest civilization. And now, looking at its origin and all it has been and is, there should

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be written on its bastioned front the memorial of John C. Calhoun. The first commander, mindful of the man who gave him the order to erect this post, named one of the large and beautiful lakes not far away, in the southwestern part of the present city of Minneapolis, Lake Calhoun; and the other was named for Colonel Leavenworth's wife, Lake Harriet.

Gen. Winfield Scott visited the fort in 1824, and he was so pleased with the energy and activity with which Colonel Snelling had pushed the work of construction that he earnestly recommended that the fort be called Fort Snelling, in honor of its efficient builder. This recommendation was approved, and a special order was issued to that effect.

### **OFFICERS OF FORT SNELLING.**

It is no purpose of this paper to pursue in detail the wonderful story of civilization building at this remote post, however intensely interesting. The procession of the years moved on in these then solitudes, and with them occurred those peculiar histories which mark military posts in the wilderness. There were joys and sorrows, loves and hates, peace and passion, marriages and deaths, some drinking and immorality, with noble, daring and chivalric honor,—the memories of all of these cluster about this historic spot. But, amid it all, the propulsive force of the presence of this citadel of the nation's power went on and made for civilization.

295

From 1819 to 1900 more than a hundred commanding officers came and went. Their influence, their individuality, their brother officers, their wives, made this place the center where culture and refinement shed light and luster into the barbaric world by which they were surrounded. The elevated tone and culture of those who from time to time comprised its official life had a most admirable influence upon the rugged early settlers, softening and refining our first society. That elevating influence has never perished. The fort was the West Point of our primitive society.

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The long list of commanding officers included a splendid body of men whose character and ability were an honor to the service. Many of them became conspicuous in the great struggle of the Civil War. There was the stately Terry, the gallant Gibbon, and Canby, the hero of Mobile, which are historic names.

Colonel Josiah Snelling is entitled to special notice. Though he had the vice of his times, drinking, yet his duties as an officer were diligently performed. He possessed energy, push, and special ability to deal with the situation. He was sent here to build a fort adapted to the extreme frontier; and he built, for that day, an imposing fortress, and under conditions, as to material and labor, of the very poorest. Gen. Winfield Scott declared the building to be most admirable. Snelling deserves a statue, or a memorial tablet, and I trust the time will come when it will be erected on these grounds.

It must be remembered, too, that this fort furnished one president of the United States. Lieutenant Colonel Zachary Taylor was here as commander from May 24, 1828, to July 12, 1829. Subsequently he was the hero of the Mexican war, winning renown on many battlefields. He became the idol of the American people, who recognized his integrity and superb courage, and by a burst of popular favor they raised him to the highest office in their gift. He had four daughters, some of them lively girls at this fortress; and the youngest of them became the wife of Lieut. Jefferson Davis, by an extraordinary elopement. Taylor was said by tradition to have been rigid in domestic matters, and when tattoo was sounded he would send the young gallants to their quarters.

296

### **THE MISSISSIPPI AND STEAMBOATING.**

Many things affected the fortunes of those early days, most of all, perhaps, the Mississippi river. For thousands of years its turbid waters had kissed the feet of yonder promontory awaiting the coming of the Anglo-Saxon. Great lakes and great rivers are the highways which the Almighty has prepared for the developing of the interior of great continents.

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Corporations cannot own or control them. They are, as the oceans, free. This mighty stream ministered to the necessities and comforts of the new fort.

The great event of those years of solitude was the arrival of a steamboat. When the smoke, gracefully curling amid the green trees, told that a boat was coming, it brought out the women, officers and men, and the startled Indians from their wigwams, and filled the very air with expectancy and joy. Then came the mail, the letters, the news,—and the wilderness, for a vivid moment, touched the very heart of the great throbbing world beyond.

This Amazonian river was then the one vast artery of trade and travel, the magnet which drew all things to its ever flowing current. Gathering up scores of affluents, and receiving the outflow from a thousand distant lakes, it was the living thread that held all commercial and social life. Mighty changes have been wrought, and the stream is denied some of its primitive power; yet it still flows on through its murmuring pines and by rocky shores, singing as it goes Tennyson's cheery song,

“For men may come and men may go, But I go on forever.”

### **FAMOUS GUESTS.**

The visits of distinguished men to the fort were inspiring events to the secluded garrison. Gen. Winfield Scott in 1824 was entertained right royally at the fort. He was the guest of Colonel Snelling. All the officers and their wives and daughters, ten in number, were present at his reception, and the ladies were distinguished by their elegant dress and flashing diamonds.

Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, the noted scholar and the discoverer of the sources of the Mississippi, was their guest in July, 1832.

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Joseph Nicolas Nicollet, a distinguished savant and famous as an astronomer, in 1836 studied the stars from the old tower through 297 our clear atmosphere. He was the most congenial and polite of all the foreigners who ever visited the fort.

Lewis Cass, the governor of Michigan and a statesman of high repute, was here in 1820.

George Catlin, famous for his work on the North American Indians, studied the habits and costumes of the savages under the protection of the fort, where he long had a studio.

Count Beltrami, an Italian of finished education, a great explorer and author, was here during Colonel Snelling's day. We have a county named in his honor.

Gen. John C. Fremont, of fame as an explorer, and afterward the first Republican candidate for the presidency, was here as a guest in 1838. He was a friend and companion while here of Nicollet.

Captain Frederick Marryat, the English author who wrote "Peter Simple" and "Midshipman Easy," was at the fort in 1837. His "Diary in America," which provoked such hot discussion, was partly written at the fort. General Sibley pronounced him "rough and conceited" in character.

The visits of such men as these did much to keep the garrison in healthy touch with the outside world, and to give education and tone to officials and men.

Life at a frontier post is not always peaceful and happy. Two duels are of record in which blood flowed. In 1826 a young officer fought a duel with the son of Colonel Snelling, whom he wounded. At the court-martial which tried the case, the accused objected to the testimony of an officer on the ground that he was an infidel. As a result of this allegation, another duel followed, and more blood flowed.

### **SLAVES AT FORT SNELLING.**



It may surprise some of you to know that slavery once actually existed on Minnesota soil. Fort Snelling was the scene. The facts are essentially these: Major Taliaferro, who was Indian agent for so many years, had inherited a number of slaves, whom he brought to Fort Snelling in 1825. Surgeon Emerson and Major Garland also brought slaves to the post about the same time. Major Garland sold a negro man to Alexis Bailly, by bill of sale, who retained him in slavery. Taliaferro hired out his slaves, male and female, to the officers of the garrison as servants.

298

Surgeon Emerson possessed a slave at the post by the name of Dred Scott, which name was destined to become a household word throughout the nation, and to vitally disturb the politics of the whole country for years. Dr. Emerson bought from Major Taliaferro a pretty mulatto girl named Harriet, who had broken many hearts in the garrison. Scott and Harriet were married at the fort in 1836 by the Indian agent. They had two children, Eliza and Lizzie. Subsequently Dr. Emerson was ordered to St. Louis, and he sold the four slaves to one Sandford, his brother-in-law. These slaves afterward brought suit for their freedom, which suit was carried to the supreme court of the United States, and thence came the Dred Scott decision, so celebrated in our political history. Thus the humble slave of Fort Snelling, in his appeal for personal liberty, did more for the overthrow of American slavery than the march of armies or the eloquence of senates.

### **JOSEPH RENSCHAW BROWN.**

To notice the history of this fort without the mention of Major Joseph Brown, whom I so well knew, would be to omit one of the most conspicuous and imperial characters there introduced into our frontier life. Joseph Renshaw Brown came to the site of Fort Snelling in 1819 as a drummer boy of the troops who came to build the fort. Without education, but with a vigorous intellect, strong common sense, measureless energy, and boundless good humor, his life was typical of our frontier days. Living with the unlearned, he became

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a ruler; but had he been bred in Boston he would have been one of the foremost men of the Athens of America.

Whether as a soldier, a trader, a politician, a legislator, or a journalist, he was a positive power. A self-cultivated and self-organized power, he laid his forming hand on everything in the territory. Others may have had more shining qualities, but Brown was the greater man. He was the Warwick of his day, and outwitted politicians called him "Joe, the Juggler."

His culture was what was shed upon him from the fort. If in the wigwam he was a barbarian, in the capital he was a statesman. Of all the men who came to Minnesota by way of the fort, in point of force, tact, influence, vigor of intellect and diversity of power, precedence must ever be given to Joseph R. Brown.

299

### **HENRY HASTINGS SIBLEY.**

With this portrait should go a companion picture; and yet the man I shall mention was totally unlike Brown. Henry Hastings Sibley came to Mendota in 1834, and at once established himself there, adjoining Fort Snelling, as agent of the American Fur Company. Young, tall, strong, with a fine intellect, speaking French like a Parisian, he came to assert himself in the surroundings of a purely savage life, an era which tested his individuality. Soon his force and genius were felt in the grand drama then being enacted. He was the annex to the fort near by, supplementing it in the work of delivering over the wilderness to civilization. Refined by the very nature of his constitution, his home became like a court on the frontier. He was, in fact, the baron of the border, and the stone house which he built in 1835, still standing at Mendota, was the castle where he dwelt as a cavalier, and dispensed a most generous hospitality.

We must ever admire the nobility of Sibley's character, his integrity, his open, frank and undissembling manner, his cultured tastes, the soundness of his judgment, his

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unflagging industry, and his pure patriotism. To take him out of our early history would be like dropping Adams or Franklin from the period of the Revolution. He stood for all that was good, refining, and forceful, in our formative period. He was one of the noblest of the august fathers of this State. In his greatness and usefulness, he was out-ranked by no man, save it be Alexander Ramsey, and these two stand as twin Corinthian pillars, sustaining and adorning the creative period of our Commonwealth.

### **CHARLOTTE OUISCONSIN VAN CLEVE.**

I should also do wrong to this occasion, were I to omit the name of Mrs. Charlotte Ouisconsin Van Cleve. Her father was Major Nathan Clark, of the regular army. She was born July 1, 1819, at Fort Crawford, while her parents were on the way from Detroit to this place. She spent eight years of her earliest life on these historic grounds. She witnessed the arrival of the first steamboat, the "Virginia," which visited the fort. Her memory has been a storehouse of historical reminiscences, and her writings have adorned many pages of our history.

300

The friend of the Indian, the mother of the poor, she richly deserves to be tenderly remembered. Honored by all, she still lives in Minneapolis, her head crowned with the frost of years, the snows that never melt; and today she is present at this memorial celebration.

### **HISTORY OF THIS FORT AND RESERVATION.**

Notwithstanding the treaty made by Pike in 1805, the Indian claim to the reservation was not wholly extinguished until the treaty of 1837, which was ratified by the senate in 1838. Many settlers even located on the land, and they were only forcibly removed by the government in 1840.

The reservation was reduced from time to time by sales of land. But in 1857 the whole reservation was in imminent danger of being abolished as a military reserve. Franklin

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Steele, formerly the fort sutler, privately negotiated with John B. Floyd, then secretary of war, for the reservation, including the buildings. The sum to be paid was \$90,000, of which \$30,000 was actually paid. Floyd withdrew the troops, and Steele assumed possession.

Associated with Steele was one Dr. Archibald Graham of Virginia. Strange to relate, this Graham, as it was afterward developed in testimony, was a silent partner of Floyd himself. The infamous secretary was guilty of "graft" in the transaction. Later on a Congressional investigation was had. It was then that Edwin M. Stanton, secretary of war, denounced the sale as "one of Floyd's infernal fly-blown contracts." Recognition of the attempted sale was strenuously resisted in Congress, chiefly by Hon. Ignatius Donnelly, then in the House of Representatives. A suit at law between the government and Steele resulted in a compromise, the government reserving to itself 1,531 acres, including the buildings, and turning the remaining part over to Steele in satisfaction of his claim.

The United States government resumed possession of the fort in 1861, and thus this noble military reservation was saved and perpetuated. After that time, however, its fortunes languished till in 1878 Gen. Alfred Terry, then in command of the department, earnestly recommended additional buildings, and Alexander Ramsey, then fortunately secretary of war, made liberal appropriations for quarters and grounds. Thus the tide was turned, which has 301 resulted in making Fort Snelling one of the most complete military posts in possession of the government. And so long as the United States of America has an army, so long will this grand old fort be maintained for military purposes.

During the Civil War, Fort Snelling again became the scene of life and military activity. Company by company the Minnesota regiments for the South rendezvoused at the fort, and were mustered into service by Captain Nelson. If you call the roster of first colonels of those regiments only two are now living, Col. William Crooks, of the Sixth, and myself, of the Tenth. The life and pageantry at the fort in those days was grand and impressive. How many brave and gallant sons of Minnesota went forth from Fort Snelling, to battle for the Republic, and, alas, how many never returned!

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This confluence of the waters of the St. Peter's and Mississippi rivers was a noted spot in the years long gone by. The very atmosphere of this unique headland is perfumed with some of the earliest and most romantic events recorded in our history. It is therefore a consecrated and venerable spot, where we celebrate this commemorative day.

This occasion will soon pass into history. None here assembled will behold its return. Who shall gather in this place a century hence to celebrate a like occasion? Will the bugles of war then have ceased to sound? Will Janus forever have closed his temple? Will this fortress be converted into a temple for the arts of peace? When war shall have forever "smoothed his wrinkled front," will the state university itself, grown greater than Heidelberg or Oxford, with its thousands of students, be transferred hither, to find wider scope for culture and art?

But whosoever they shall be, they will assuredly recount the proceedings of this day. They will celebrate then, as we do now, the story of the awakening of a great empire. Whosoever they may be, we bid them welcome to these groves, to these healthful skies, to these verdant valleys, to these everlasting hills. May the end of that second century find them in the enjoyment of good government, of civil liberty, of perpetual peace, with an opulence of culture, all crowned with the genius of Christianity herself.